

Scenarios Activity Steps

1. Read and listen to instructions.

2. Break into assigned groups. The teacher will distribute the Scenarios Handout and assign scenarios to groups. (If time constraints require that this activity be compressed, each group may handle just three or four scenarios; if the option is used, groups should be small enough that each student gets to act as president for one scenario.)

3. Quiet time: Read through scenarios carefully and record advice for each scenario.

4. Preparation: Each student should fold a sheet of paper into four squares. In each square on both sides, students should individually answer questions for each of the scenarios. This sheet will serve as notes for the cabinet meeting.

5. Begin cabinet meetings

- **Calculate how much time** you can devote to each situation. Decide who will be president for each scenario (a different person should act as president for each scenario). Choose one scenario to begin.
- During discussion of each scenario, **the president should take notes** on suggestions. These notes will be used later when the president drafts a memorandum about the scenario.
- The various **cabinet officials share their advice with** the president, who asks questions and takes notes. There are no obvious best options to choose in any of the scenarios. Different opinions about the best choice are good! The president should encourage advisors to fully analyze each option and develop new options if none of the already-stated options is satisfactory.
- Move on to the **next scenario**, select a new president-memo-writer, and **repeat Steps B and C above**.
- When all scenarios have been decided, **each president** records his or her name and Scenario number at the top of a draft memo page: (President: _____/Scenario # __) and **drafts a memorandum on the scenario**. The memorandum should describe the situation; list options and the advantages and disadvantages of each; state a decision, and explain why the decision was made.
- **Assessment** by the teacher (representing The People) will be based on notes, a presidential memo, and participation. Teachers may wish to allow presidents to submit memos after they have had an opportunity to refine them.

Scenario 1

Budget deficits have grown over the past several years, and it looks like there is no end in sight. The economy is doing relatively well, however, and most people are content. In her campaign, the president promised “no new taxes,” which many pollsters credit with her election success. In several large cities, where the drug problem is chronic, neighborhood organizers representing minority groups have called for new federal employment programs to help solve the underlying causes of the killing and destruction of inner-city neighborhoods. While the president agrees with the neighborhood organizers philosophically, she does not feel the government can spare the necessary money to fund new programs. She asked these groups to be patient. She feels that, eventually their problems will be solved through volunteer efforts. When the White House announced that no new programs would be proposed (and funded) to help inner cities, rioting broke out in several cities to protest the decision. The mayors of these cities have appealed to the president to help put down the riots. The organizers of the protests have again pleaded for new employment programs to combat the drug violence and stop the unrest. Many people would say that the president must either increase government debt or fail to help the cities with their long-term problems.

- 1. What options are available to the President? For each option list an advantage and a disadvantage for the president.**
- 2. What power(s) or duty (duties) will she exercise to accomplish her goal?**
- 3. What is your recommendation? Why?**

Scenario 2

Last year Congress passed a new immigration law that requires all immigrants seeking permanent admission to this country to be able to "read and write some dialect or language." The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in The Department of Justice was directed to write regulations that would spell out what this clause means. The regulations would answer questions such as: How well must an alien be able to read and write? And what kind of tests will be given? The problem is that these regulations have not yet been written. The INS claims that they are under funded and do not have enough employees to get all the work done that they are expected to do. The members of Congress who wrote the law suspect that the real reason why nothing has been done is because the people who run the INS do not like that part of the law and are trying to delay implementing it as long as possible. The Congressmen point out that when the INS employee testified before the Congressional committee considering this law, he argued that many countries lack a good educational system, so immigrants from their countries are unable to read. These Congressmen are demanding that the President do something -- Now!

- 1. What options are available to the president? For each option list an advantage and a disadvantage.**
- 2. What power(s) or duty will he exercise to accomplish his goal?**
- 3. What is your recommendation? Why?**

Scenario 3

A civil war has broken out in a country in which the U.S. has limited relations, but the United Nations has arranged for a referendum to let the people of this country choose a new government. The warring factions agree to let the people of the whole country decide who should gain control. It looks like the citizens may elect a communist government that opposes the United States. There is another candidate who endorses the policies of the United States. Should the United States do anything to influence the election?

- 1. What options are available to the president? For each option list an advantage and a disadvantage.**
- 2. What power(s) or duty (duties) will she exercise in this use to accomplish her goal?**
- 3. What is your recommendation? Why?**

Scenario 4

The president has supported the government of a country engulfed in a civil war. Government crackdowns on protesters have pitted a popular group of citizens against the government. This group claims that they were put in jail and tortured. Other sectors of the population unite behind this group. The U.S. has warned the government to settle this unrest, but the tension persists. International interest is focused on the situation. The survival of the government of this country is threatened. Some people say that our choice is to turn our back on a government that is friendly to the U.S., or to support that same government that is oppressive to its people. Should the U.S. government continue to support this government?

- 1. What options are available to the president? For each option list an advantage and a disadvantage.**
- 2. What power(s) or duty (duties) will he exercise in this use to accomplish his goal?**
- 3. What is your recommendation? Why?**

Scenario 5

A U.S. ally has been threatened by a neighboring country. The president sent naval troops to patrol the coast of the aggressive country, hoping a U.S. presence will act as a deterrent. A report of an attack on our ships arrives. Congress authorizes the president to take necessary means to prevent further aggression.

- 1. What options are available to the President?**
- 2. What power(s) or duty (duties) will she exercise in this use to accomplish her goal?**
- 3. What is your recommendation? Why?**

Scenario 6

The U.S. is at war with a foreign country. In an effort to secure victory more quickly, the president moves troops into new territories. Public opinion polls show an increasing tide of opposition by the people against this war and against the president's policies. Congressional elections are coming soon, and because of the polls many members of Congress are speaking out against the war. The president feels continued U.S. involvement is vital to the security of the United States. Should the public's actions and opinions affect the President's policies?

- 1. What options are available to the President? For each option list an advantage and a disadvantage.**
- 2. What power(s) or duty (duties) will he exercise in this use to accomplish his goal?**
- 3. What is your recommendation? Why?**

Scenario 7

The president has just been re-elected. Her victory is so great that she has carried into office a solid majority in the House and Senate for her political party. A major platform of her campaign was rebuilding the defenses of the United States. To have an adequate defense, the president believes that a minimum of \$400 billion must be spent in the next year. Most members of the opposition party feel that this is just too much money to spend, and many members of the president's own party seem to agree, especially many Senators who have been in office for many years and do not owe the president any political favors. Many key members of the Appropriations Committee will not budge on this issue, and they will be important on other issues in the future. Many people would say that the president will have to either back down on her promise or get into a fight that she will not win.

- 1. What options are available to the president? For each option list an advantage and a disadvantage.**
- 2. What power(s) or duty (duties) will she exercise in this use to accomplish her goal?**
- 3. What is your recommendation? Why?**

Scenario 8

The Secretary of Transportation has angered many people by not spending all of the money that Congress appropriated for repair of bridges and highways across the nation. By and large, the needed repairs have not been made. At the same time, the Secretary of Transportation remains very popular with the airline, train, and shipping industries. Indeed, the president's nomination and election probably would not have taken place without organizational and financial support from lobbyists from these groups. The leaders of these groups have informed the President that their support for him will be withdrawn from the President's re-election campaign if he replaces his Secretary of

Transportation. The Chief of Staff interrupts an important meeting to tell the President that a bridge on an interstate highway that had been identified as needing repairs has collapsed, killing 52 people, including 16 pre-school children who were in a day-care van crossing the bridge. The Secretary of Transportation has just issued a statement to the press that the bridge collapse was unfortunate, but it was the fault of the state government, which should have done something to prevent the collapse.

- 1. What should the President do next? How should he handle the crisis?**
- 2. What options are available to the President? For each option list an advantage and a disadvantage.**
- 3. What power(s) or duty (duties) will he exercise in this use to accomplish his goal?**
- 4. What is your recommendation? Why?**